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EFSEC Receives Request to Study Wind Power Project

OLYMPIA – The Washington State Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council (EFSEC) received a request on Wednesday to study a proposal to develop a 165 megawatt wind turbine project in eastern Kittitas County. Wind Ridge Partners L.L.C., a wholly owned subsidiary of Zilkha Renewable Energy of Houston, Texas, is requesting EFSEC conduct a Potential Site Study of its proposed 100 wind turbine, Wild Horse Wind Power Project located near Whisky Dick Mountain. This study will be conducted prior to Zilkha submitting an application for a Site Certification permit to construct and operate the facility.

This is the second project that Zilkha has proposed in Kittitas County. In January of this year, Zilkha applied to EFSEC for a permit to construct and operate the 182 megawatt Kittitas Valley Wind Power Project located northwest of Ellensburg. EFSEC is proceeding with its review of the Kittitas Valley Wind Power Project and is scheduled to complete its review by the end of the year. The Wild Horse Wind Power Project is the third wind power project proposed for Kittitas County.

EFSEC will immediately begin conducting a Potential Site Study of the Wild Horse Wind Power Project. The study will determine what environmental, socioeconomic, cultural, and other information will be required to be included in an Application for Site Certification. EFSEC has retained an independent consultant to help conduct the study. The study will also look at what information is needed if an Environmental Impact Statement is required. Announcements of public meetings regarding this study will be issued later.

In 2001 the state Legislature changed state law allowing alternative energy resources of any size to submit applications to EFSEC for state review. EFSEC Chair Jim Luce said: "The request for EFSEC to conduct a Potential Site Study and probable future application to site the Wild Horse Wind Power Project indicates that EFSEC's review process is one that works." Luce also noted: "We anticipate that after the completion of the Potential Site Study EFSEC will be able to proceed more swiftly through its review of an application to site the project."

If requested, prior to receiving an application to site a project, EFSEC can study environmental and other issues relative to a proposed project site to identify the significant issues that need to be addressed in an application. Nothing stated or recommended by EFSEC's independent consultant or by EFSEC during the study shall be interpreted as preliminary approval or disapproval of the potential site.

EFSEC is a state board with a chair appointed by the Governor, and representatives from five state agencies that are required to be represented on the board. Information regarding EFSEC and projects under review is posted on its web site at www.efsec.wa.gov.